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An Invention with a Future
French Cinema After the End of Cinema

Martine Beugnet

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Cinema had hardly been born than its French inventors, the Lumières, allegedly declared it an invention without a future.[1] As early as 1933, Antonin Artaud professed it to be already obsolete – a prematurely aged medium.[2] In the same period, it was feared that the advent of sound would effectively kill cinema as an art form, and since the 1950s, television has been expected to deal cinema a fatal blow.[3]

Cinema's death has been foretold a great many times and discourses on its obsolescence have been a recurrent feature in the field of film theory, and, later, film and media theory.[4] However, speculations about the death of cinema as we know it have never been as prevalent and elaborated as they have since the 1990s, when digital electronics started to dominate the media scene. Indeed, the advent of digital emerged as a more powerful "threat" than any of the previous technological and cultural mutations that directly or indirectly affected cinema. Digital arguably deals cinema a double-edged blow: thanks to encoding, it facilitates the process of "remediation"[5] of the medium of the moving image started by video and television, and extends it to the multiplicity of platforms and screens of all sizes that denote our era of media convergence. It therefore strikes cinema in its institutional heart (the infrastructure of film production and distribution and the ritual of cinema-going) as well as in its material existence and aesthetic specificity, as digital technology arguably renders analog film obsolete.

France's privileged connection to the beginnings of cinema and its continuing investment in the evolution of the seventh art resulting in the creation, over time, of a distinctive cinematic culture, is no mere topos.[6] As Raymond Bellour sums it, as a medium, "Cinema's unique identity is born of this unparalleled combination of theory and criticism that French cinephilia created: Bazin, the *Cahiers du cinéma*,

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the *Politique des auteurs*."[7] It therefore comes as no surprise that the move from analog to digital, and the ensuing debate over the new, imminent, "death of cinema," not only features prominently in French film criticism but also emerges as a key theme in contemporary French films. If the shadow of Jean-Luc Godard's extraordinary video project *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988, 1989, 1997, 1998) looms large,[8] the trope of cinema's "death" is in fact part of a persistent trope that has produced an array of creative reflexive responses throughout the spectrum of French filmmaking.

At first sight, there appears to be very little in common between the films discussed in this chapter: Raymond Depardon's short film *Cinéma d'été* (2007),[9] the popular musical comedy *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011), the animation features *L'Illusionniste / The Illusionist* (Sylvain Chomet, 2010) and *Un monstre à Paris / A Monster in Paris* (Bibo Bergeron, 2011), the experimental works *Terminus for You* (Nicolas Rey, 1996) and *Chants* (Martine Rousset, 1997), and Jean-Charles Fitoussi's intriguing mobile phone feature *Nocturnes pour le roi de Rome* (2005). Yet, all these films share a specific metacinematic quality, one that they derive, in nostalgic, humoristic, or matter-of-fact mode, from their implicit or explicit questioning of the future of the medium of which they represent various embodiments, and by the same token, the future of an art form and an industry that is, in the diversity of its expressions and genres, central to France's cultural identity.

This chapter will not attempt to offer a survey of the extensive responses that the medium's changing status has elicited amongst French theorists and historians of the cinema. Its exploration of the critical and reflexive effect of the move from analog to digital will, instead, start from the films, so as to create a dialogue between contemporary filmmaking practices on the one hand, and the theoretical debate that this technological and cultural shift generated on the other. It will outline a range of concepts and practices characteristic of the response to cinema's recent evolution in a French context, from the diverse manifestations of nostalgia in evidence in the "retro" or vintage trends to the debate over the importance of the cinema-going experience in defining the medium's unique identity, and the more innovative responses that French films offer to the eventuality of an end of cinema as we know it.

Vintage Cinema

In the age of 3D, CGI, and futuristic action blockbusters, the narrative and stylistic features of Michel Hazanavicius's *The Artist* initially make it sound like a somewhat implausible commercial venture. Both a pastiche of studio production of the silent era and a homage to classic Hollywood, Hazanavicius's film is shot in black and white, punctuated with intertitles, and almost entirely devoid of diegetic

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sound. Set in the late 1920s, it chronicles the parallel destinies of a silent movie star (played by Jean Dujardin) who falls into disfavor, and of a rising female actress (Bérénice Bejo) who reaches fame as sound cinema becomes the norm. The year of its release, the film was one of French cinema's front-runners nationally and internationally, both in terms of box office and critical reception. Amongst the numerous awards it garnered, those for best actor bestowed on Dujardin stand as an ironical extension of the film's evocation of the demise of the silent era: whereas the "talkies" arguably marked the end of cinema's claims as an art form capable of reaching a universal audience, only when acting a silent part could a contemporary French-speaking actor lay claim to such prestigious American acknowledgements of his performance as Oscars and Golden Globes nominations.

However, if the presence of one of France's most fashionable actors certainly contributed to the film's finding a sizable audience, it is its savvy combination of accessible narrative and conventional characterization with a commitment to an atypical stylistic format that granted the film its popular appeal. Indeed, the somewhat fetishistic focus on the effects born out of the film's "retro" form (tellingly, the only substantial irruption of diegetic sound occurs in the course of a nightmare) also marks its limits: pointing to the effect of distance created by the persistence of the stylistic artifice, Joachim Lepastier calls it a "deaf" film.[10] For Emiliano Morreale, in its mannerist reworking of cinematic nostalgia, *The Artist* is exemplary of the "vintage" bent that marks part of the contemporary production:

> Nostalgia is Modernity's daughter, and up to a certain point follows a "modernist" model where history is understood as a movement toward decline. … Today, the phenomenon is broader and more complex. More than retro, revival or nostalgia, the most adequate term to characterize contemporary cinema's relationship with the past is vintage … vintage is, in effect, the opposite of history, and even of memory, it is a trend: a quotation-trend, where the past is a wardrobe. The success of a vintage operation is to call back the right period at the right time.[11]

If *The Artist* seemingly chose "the right period at the right time," however, it is partly because the recollection of the climate of uncertainty of the era in question resonates with the perceived state of decline of cinema in the age of digital: in both cases, the "crisis" was the result of a technological mutation that directly affected the medium.[12] As such, in spite of, or indeed, thanks to its very limitations, the film paradoxically stands as a reminder of cinema's endurance in the face of technological change. However, in its recurrent staging of cinema as event (*The Artist* includes several prolonged scenes of private and public screenings), as well as its use of film as a prop for its dramatic climax (the central character almost dies in the furnace created by reels of nitrate film set ablaze), *The Artist* does point to two key areas of uncertainty that call into question the medium's identity: the future of analog film and of the cinema-going ritual.

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Only the Cinema

Is "cinema" still a definable object or phenomenon in the era of remediation and media convergence, when cinematic effects are absorbed by other media forms and films themselves turned into (mere) data, and therefore available, like any other data, for duplication and compression, and susceptible to be further manipulated, fragmented, and abbreviated, before it is redistributed in a multitude of formats and on a growing number of platforms and screens of all sizes? That cinema remains a key element of French cultural identity is in evidence in the way the question of its future polarizes the opinions of the French-speaking field of film, history of art, and media studies.[13] In his latest book, Raymond Bellour answers the vexed question through a playful dialogue, in which he rebuffs the suggestion that cinema can be successfully "relocated" through other devices.[14] From television to mobile phones, these modes of reception only apply to a "degraded vision of the cinema film."[15] For him, Jean-Luc Godard's classic assertion still holds: cinema's images are projected on a large scale; you raise your eyes to look at them. In any other form of vision, it is not cinema you experience, but its mere memory.[16]

Similarly, Bellour refutes the notion that cinema's future lies with the art world, in the form of projections in galleries and museums. Practical issues aside (screening conditions in these institutions can never be adequate), implicit in this scheme, he argues, is the notion that cinema is both redeemed and revealed by the contemporary artists who plunder its archive – a denial of cinema's own reflexive power, as well as of cinema's continuing existence as an art in itself.[17]

Bellour's argument has the advantage of simplicity and precision: for him, the medium's mongrel origins and repeated mutations notwithstanding, cinema's identity was forged, over time, in relation to specific conditions of reception. As such, the very notion of cinema cannot be dissociated from that of public projection:

> To experience the projection of a film in a cinema, in the dark, as part of an audience – large or reduced – has become, and remains, the condition of a unique spectatorial experience of perception and memory that will be transformed, to a lesser or greater extent, in any other viewing situation. This, and only this deserves to be called "cinema".[18]

Bellour reiterates the principles of an experience of the cinema and a tradition of cinephilia that apply not just to cinema's object, film, but to the unique spectatorial practice that the cinema implies. As such, Bellour's defense of the uniqueness of the cinema experience recalls Roland Barthes's classic passage on the lure of the darkened space of the film theatre and the appeal of the cinema-going ritual:

> … fascinated *twice over*, by the image and its surroundings – as if I had two bodies at the same time: a narcissistic body which gazes, lost, into the engulfing mirror, and a

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> perverse body, ready to fetishize not the image but precisely what exceeds it: the texture of the sound, the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of the other bodies, the rays of light, entering the theatre, leaving the hall …[19]

A similar understanding of cinema's identity as a uniquely combined art form and display apparatus was the basis for a project designed to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Cannes Film Festival in 2007. At the instigation of Gilles Jacob, president of the Festival, 36 prominent directors[20] were asked to contribute to an anthology of short films entitled *To Each His Own Cinema*. If this title suggests, at first, an all-encompassing conception of the cinema, the filmmakers' assignment was, in effect, very precise: they were invited to create a short film inspired by their current thoughts and feelings about the picture theatre. The sub-headings given to the collection are revealing: the main title, *Chacun son cinéma* (To Each His Own Cinema) is alternatively coupled with *"une déclaration d'amour au grand écran"* (a declaration of love to the big screen) or *"ce petit coup au cœur quand la lumière s'éteint et que le film commence"* (that thrill when the lights dim and the film begins). The anthology opens with *Cinéma d'été* (Open-Air Cinema, 2007, 3 min), a short documentary by veteran filmmaker Raymond Depardon. Depardon's film displays those qualities that have become his trademark. Meticulous attention to photography and framing, sparse camera movement and editing, and the relay of a benevolent, non-intrusive gaze allow the viewer to partake in the magic of the event depicted on screen: an outdoor screening at Alexandria's oldest film theatre, the Rio. *Cinéma d'été* starts with a series of static shots of the cityscape bathed in the soft, blue-grey light of dusk, an almost monochrome expanse of facades dotted with a few bright neon signs, with ~~a few~~ columns at the forefront signaling the presence of an archaeological site. The shots are interspersed with views of the cinema's monumental open air screen, its massive proscenium thus visually associated with the remnant of the archaeological site's classical columns, as one among many historical landmarks in a city rich in ancient and modern culture. As the gaze of the camera explores the cinema's empty auditorium, built on a rooftop, an atmosphere of expectation sets in. The silhouette of the projectionist discreetly crosses the hall, and the projection booth suddenly lights up against the settling darkness. Depardon films the arrival of the audience – a group of young people animatedly chatting as they climb up to the cinema and make their way amongst the rows of seats – and lovingly depicts the projectionist's handling of the 35 mm projector, lingering in close-up on the man's hands, as he checks the mechanisms and adjusts the focus. The filming of the screening switches from screen to audience, as the crowd watches with benign, amused expressions the tribulations and emotional predicaments of the young heroes of a romantic musical comedy. The film concludes with a few shots in the street, in front of the cinema. A mix of cars and horse-driven carts pass by as a young couple shares a snack, while presumably discussing the film they have just seen, or might want to see.

Recent political events have granted Depardon's unassuming short film an unexpected poignancy. The youths depicted in this film are similar to the young

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Egyptians who took part in the events of the Arab Spring in Alexandria, only to see their victory recouped by the most conservative forces in the country. The simple pleasures of cinema-going depicted by Depardon have thus since come under threat, potentially taking on the character of subversive activities: a young couple discussing freely in the street at night, actresses dressed in the latest trend playing professional women, watched by young women with or without head-dress, on a night out with their female and male friends …

In effect, the uneven quality of its offerings notwithstanding, one of the achievements of *Chacun son cinéma*'s collection of shorts is to remind us that the diversity of experience of the cinema is inflected by the geographic, cultural, and political context, and, by the same token, to reassert the importance of the cinema as a special *event* in regions where the latest technology is not yet pervasive. Interestingly, however, no matter how remote or faraway the location, French cinema remains a key reference to a number of the filmmakers who contributed to the compilation – citations and other visual evocations of classic French films thus circulate through the collection like so many allegories of cinephilic culture. This is most prominent in *Artaud Double Bill* (2007, 3 min), Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan's contribution to the anthology. Here, the new technologies appear not so much as a threat, the advent of the era of the distracted gaze and of the "degraded image," than as an extension of the continuing circulation of images. As the creations of an art form dependent on mechanical reproduction, classic film images have always tended to migrate, from film to film, and from spectator to spectator. Filmmakers consciously or unconsciously quote or copy other filmmakers; films cite films; characters in films go to the cinema or impersonate other fictional characters, and spectators bring their memory of cinema into play as they watch a recent feature. In Egoyan's film, mobile phones are an additional relay to this circulation of images, and by multiplying the echoes, citations, and *mises en abyme* to excess, the filmmaker humorously reflects on the effect of the new devices amongst a public of young, multi-tasking spectators.[21] In *Artaud Double Bill*, two young women plan to go to the cinema together but end up in different auditoriums of the same film theatre. The film alternates between the two places, following the to-and-fro of text messages that Anna and Nicole exchange in the course of their respective screenings. While Nicole attends a show of Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre sa vie* / *My Life to Live* (1962), Anna ends up watching Atom Egoyan's own *The Adjuster* (1991), and Egoyan plays fully on the effect of *mise en abyme* offered by both films. Nicole thus watches *Vivre sa vie*'s Nana (Anna Karina) sitting in a cinema watching Carl T. Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* / *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), while Anna witnesses film censor Hera (Arsinée Khanjian), the central character of *The Adjuster*, watching (and, surreptitiously, filming) a pornographic feature she has to assess as part of her job. Soon, Anna and Nicole start texting each other, Egoyan superimposing the screen of the mobile phone in close-up and the cinematic images deployed on the large screen in the background. As Antonin Artaud appears in Dreyer's film, watched by Karina / Nana and by contemporary spectator Nicole,

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Nicole is struck by the beauty of the actor and texts Anna. Anna asks for proof, and Nicole shoots a sequence with her mobile phone and sends it on. Anna thus watches in turn, on her own tiny screen, the scene where the young monk played by Artaud tells Jeanne (Renée Falconetti) she is to die by fire. Simultaneously, in the background, the scene from *The Adjuster* shows a house burning down.

Egoyan's film offers itself as a witty, yet ambivalent, vision of contemporary cinema-going habits. On the one hand, the use of mobile phones in the course of a screening is typical of the kind of distracted viewing induced by the multiplication and ubiquity of communication devices. On the other hand, Anna and Nicole's exchange of text messages unwittingly extends the principle of citation and dissemination – favored by the directors of the *Nouvelle Vague*, and continued in the work of contemporary auteurs such as Egoyan – that is at the heart of cinephilic culture. However, Egoyan's whimsical and charming evocation of cinema-going, and the reception of canonical films in the era of media convergence and mobile communication ends with a note of doom: the intertitle *"La Mort"* from *Jeanne d'Arc*, appears on top of the flames that fill the screen of *The Adjuster*, only to be followed by *Artaud Double Bill*'s final credits, presented in the form of a damaged strip of celluloid – a list of names unraveling on a heavily scratched and discolored surface.

At the end of Egoyan's film the juxtaposition of the intertitle *"La Mort"* with images of flames and the degraded look characteristic of analog film (itself a highly flammable material) relates the question of old and new forms of spectatorship and cinephilia to that of the potential obsolescence of film in its analog format. For Bellour, the impact of the shift from analog to digital is limited: digital "does not have an effect on the essential aspects: the show, the movie theatre, the screen, darkness, silence, spectators assembled together for a period of time."[22] Indeed, if initially the shift from analog to digital appeared to destroy film's traditional, indexical relation to the profilmic, in practice the change is not necessarily tangible: whether armed with an analog or a digital camera, filmmakers have continued to direct their lenses toward the profilmic, thus exploiting digital film's own indexical value.[23] Even though the quality of the digital image remains an issue, filmmakers have started to exploit digital imaging's distinctive sharpness and flatness for its own aesthetic effect, while technological developments continue to broaden the spectrum of possibilities: the mastermind of camera technology, Jean-Pierre Beauviala, is currently experimenting with a new kind of lens and filters so as to create a digital image that will emulate the grain and subtle contrast of analog film.[24] Yet the question of analog film's obsolescence cannot be dismissed so easily. As Mary-Anne Doane and Laura Mulvey have pointed out, in an age where digital media, thanks to its seemingly[25] endless capacity for replication, archiving, and storing, institutes the reign of the immortal image, analog film's vulnerability and finitude render it more valuable to us. Paradoxically, the very medium that Benjamin associated with the waning of the aura has now, thanks to its capacity to bear the signs of the effect of time passing, acquired an auratic quality of its own.[26]

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Sensitivity to these issues can be felt throughout the spectrum of French film production, in the films of directors working within the boundaries of popular and mainstream cinema, where the return to "retro" or vintage trends combines with experiments with hybrid formats, as well as in the work of experimental filmmakers celebrating the unique qualities of analog filmmaking while reflecting on its alleged obsolescence.

Animation Retro-Style

The Artist is not an isolated example of the "vintage bent." Some of the most noted productions in recent French animation, in particular, offer themselves as painstaking restagings of the past that generate that particular "vintage" quality born of the imitation and combination of specific "period looks." In *L'Illusionniste / The Illusionist* (Sylvain Chomet, 2010) and *Un monstre à Paris / A Monster in Paris* (Bibo Bergeron, 2011), as in *The Artist*, the restaging of a bygone era of the medium of the moving image is framed by an evocation of forms of popular entertainment that hark back, like early cinema, to the era of the music hall.

While its plot recalls an 1822 tale by Ernst Hoffmann that focuses on the world of fairground attractions,[27] Bergeron's film is set in the 1910s. It casts a *café concert*

Figure 26.1 The illusionist faces his double as Tati in *L'Illusionniste* (Sylvain Chomet, 2010). *The Illusionist / L'Illusionniste* (original title); 2010; Sylvain Chomet; Pathé (presents), Django Films (co-production), Ciné B (co-production), France 3 Cinéma (co-production), Canal+ (participation), CinéCinéma (participation), France Télévision (participation), Ink. Digital.

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singer as his central character and a projectionist and an usherette as supporting characters, and situates one of its key settings in a glass-house as a direct reference to George Méliès's purpose-built studio.[28] Loosely set in the 1950s, Chomet's film is based on a reworking of an unrealized scenario by Jacques Tati, who is also the inspiration for the illusionist of the title. Moreover, its uncanny revival of the incomparable silhouette of the genius director and actor, serves as an evocation of the predicament of a traditional entertainment artist in decline, also set in the world of the music hall.[29] Both of these animation films involve a meticulous work of iconographic and color reconstruction, as well as a range of historical musical references, in order to create an immersive universe evocative of a particular era. Whereas Chomet insists on the import of the hand-crafted part of the process perceptible in the "pen and ink" quality of his 2D animation,[30] Bergeron attempts to counteract the "unnatural" and atemporal smoothness characteristic of computer-generated 3D graphics with a period look inspired by impressionist painting as well as the iconography typical of the Paris of the *belle époque*.[31] In Bergeron's film the aptly called Francoeur ("truthful heart"), the monster of the title, is the result of a scientifically aided mutation both in the diegesis (through the mishandling of a scientist's laboratory phials) and as part of the movie's CGI-based graphic morphing. Interestingly, Francoeur is a fundamentally good figure – one that therefore stands as an allegory for the acceptance of the latest computer-generated effects even into the period world of retro French animation. Hence, while one would expect a work reminiscent of one of Hoffman's tales to play on uncanny effects, interestingly, in Bergeron's film, the sense of the uncanny is born of the mix of live and animated images rather than the monstrous change of scale and nature undergone by Francoeur.

Most intriguing, indeed, is the use of found footage in *The Illusionist* and *A Monster in Paris*, which both include brief sequences of (photographic) film footage. In both cases, the live footage appears on the screens of virtual cinemas, watched by an audience of animated characters. In effect, Bergeron's film opens with such a sequence: a crowd of cartoon characters watching the projection of authentic newsreels chronicling the great Paris flood of 1910. In *The Illusionist*, the peregrinations of the main character, the magician Tatischeff, lead him to settle in Edinburgh. There, he eventually encounters his live double when he mistakenly steps into the Cameo Cinema where *Mon oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958) is playing. Tatischeff the cartoon character thus finds himself face to face with Tati in one of his famous incarnations as Monsieur Hulot. In *A Monster*, as in *The Illusionist*, the encounter with live footage thus creates a doubly uncanny sense of reversal. More than the *mise en abyme* created by the (painstakingly reconstructed) cinema-going situation depicted in the two sequences, it is the implant of live images, with their aura of indexical authenticity and physicality, within a world of virtual beings, that fosters a strange impression of unfamiliar familiarity.

Indeed, in both films, "live" footage, embedded in, or grafted onto, the larger body of the animation film thus appears as a marginal mode of representation, as

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if to illustrate Lev Manovich's classic description of the demise of cinema's outmoded indexical guise and the reintegration of the medium of the moving image into the history of visual culture as a branch of graphic art:

> … the manual construction of images in digital cinema represents a return to nineteenth-century pre-cinematic practices, when images were hand-painted and hand-animated. At the turn of the twentieth century, cinema was to delegate these manual techniques to animation and define itself as a recording medium. As cinema enters the digital age, these techniques are again becoming the commonplace in the filmmaking process. Consequently, cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation. It is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting.[32]

The particular resonance that Manovich's oft-quoted statement acquires in the context of Chomet and Bergeron's works is born of the characteristic fascination that these animation features betray for the beginnings of cinema. The presence of brief excerpts of "live" footage thus seemingly becomes part of a literal reframing where film in its analog photographic form is but a glitch in a broader historical outlook that embraces the very origins of the medium of the moving image as well as its future as a graphic, computerized, and digitized media form.

In the actual viewing experience, however, the effect of the juxtaposition of the live and animated footage comes well in excess of the theoretical pairing I just made between Manovich and the two films. There is an undeniable sense of poignancy in the elusive presence of the live footage – the expression of a nostalgic yearning and awe for the kind of precious testimony that only analog film, as a photographic-indexical trace of the past has preserved. But, as Ian Garwood further points out in his study of mixed visual formats, hybrid forms of imaging yield a specific sensory and aesthetic surplus.[33] The combination of textures, composition, and movements, the different sense of fullness offered by the photographic accuracy and detail on the one hand, and the more painterly declination of graphic effects and color palette on the other, generate their own sense of visual wonder and sensual pleasure. The unforeseen apparitions of live footage puncture the neat, autarchic universe of the animated feature film like a door opening between two worlds (indeed, in Chomet's film, the live film can be briefly glimpsed through the cinema's half-open doors before the animated impersonification of Tati comes, for a brief moment, to contemplate its filmed incarnation). Through the uncanny encounter of the two forms of cinematic imaging that the films thus stage, the "expressive possibilities" specific to each film form are emphasized.[34] In this, the world of mainstream animation meets that of experimental filmmaking: in experimental cinema, awareness of the specific aesthetic qualities of film's range of formats remains key, and the issue of analog's obsolescence proves a particularly sensitive one.

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Twilight Visions

There is one form of filmmaking that cannot ever be emulated by digital filmmaking: materialist filmmaking, also sometimes designated as "handmade cinema", is based on the direct intervention onto the filmstrip. From the beginnings of cinema, filmmakers have used analog film not simply as a photographic surface, but as a material basis that could be altered through a limitless array of manipulations – from chemical intervention to writing, painting and scratching the surface of the (blank or pre-recorded) footage.[35] Although it has produced some of the masterpieces of early and modern cinema, this well-established school of filmmaking is doomed to disappear if the production of analog film ceases. Better than any other forms of filmmaking, materialist film reveals what is at stake in the analog-to-digital shift, throwing into relief the deceptiveness of the dominant theory of technological evolution where the digital is seen as a *continuation* and as a *replacement* of analog film.[36]

Shot in 1996, as the threat represented by digital film to earlier formats had become a given, Nicolas Rey's film *Terminus for You* (9 min) is a captivating instance of reflexive cinema that hones on the issue of film's transience. *Terminus for You* is a film that creatively and humorously contemplates its own demise – a celebration of analog film that offers itself as a combined allegory of film's mortality and the finite cycle of human life.

Rey's film is based on 16 mm black and white footage of the conveyor-belts that carry passengers through the Montparnasse underground station in Paris. Moved along the conveyor-belt against a backdrop of information signs and advertisement posters, travelers pass by in front of the static camera, some lost in thought or heedlessly hurrying along, some staring into the lens, smiling or making faces. Shot on old film stock, Rey's images have the grainy quality of early films, heightened by the insert of negative images. In the style of expressionist painting, the high contrasts and thick outlines tend to erase the finer features while emphasizing particular details: the eyes and mouth of a face; a pair of glasses; a hat; the bold lettering or the lines of drawings on posters floating on saturated white backgrounds. In addition, part of the footage was reprinted and treated chemically, so as to further alter and gradually destroy its photographic content: figures and signs distort and melt as foreground and background progressively dissolve into one another, as the film evolves from figurative to abstract.

Rey structured his film in cubist fashion, like an audiovisual collage or cine-poem of heterogeneous material without a sense of a stable point of view or perspective. With the conveyor-belt providing the traveling movement, the camera alternately pans right to left and left to right to follow the silhouettes of the people who cross its field of vision, and in further disregard of conventional continuity rules, shifts from one to the other side of the conveyor belt between shots. Through montage, some sequences are repeated with the direction of the movement inverted, while the images reappear as negative prints.

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Out of his initial footage, Rey extracts or creates an absorbing range of effects and visual quotations. Close-up shots of the metallic belt punctuate the film like so many abstract geometric motifs, while cut-up sentences and words, as well as details from advertising posters, provide caustic comments on the quality and loneliness of urban existence. Similarly, the optical sound-track, more noise-music than commentary, conveys a mixture of echoes and sensations, its fragments of old-fashioned music, occasional crackling and muffled tones, providing an equivalent to the grainy quality of the images. Public advertisements and announcements blast through the station's loudspeakers while in the distance are echoes of a street-organ or circus band mixed with industrial drilling-like sounds and ringing that recall the start of horse-races. At times, the combination of soundtrack and image thus evokes the origins of cinema: a fairground atmosphere where the silhouettes of the commuters appear to take part in an endless parade of urban characters announced in the style of the "attraction" show by ringing sounds, slogans, and puns. Indeed, Rey weaves into his images the traces of practices associated with the beginnings of cinema and the work of the first avant-garde movements as well as contemporary art forms. On the one hand, *Terminus for You* evokes the futurists' and surrealists' celebration of modern street life, the invention of noise-music, and the cubist practice of cut-up words and images for collage and analytical montage effects. On the other hand, the high contrast and grainy quality of the photography recall the now degraded images of old silent movies as much as the use of the "blown-up" effect most readily associated with Andy Warhol's screen printing.

While it thus implicitly reminds us of film's key role in a long, constantly renewed tradition of artistic expression bent on capturing the evolution of modern life, Rey's film is also a cinematic *vanitas* – a *memento mori* on the transience of things rendered all the more suggestive by the whimsical, humorous nature of the filmmaker's allegorical elaboration.

Rey finds in the underground station conveyor-belt a simple, classic trope of contemporary urban life that doubles as a metaphor for film. Like a film loop, the conveyor belt circles endlessly, yet its visible portion offers an illusion of linear progression, transporting human bodies from A to B with the smooth lateral movement of a traveling shot, in the predetermined direction and calculated time of an endlessly repeated scenario. The variety of "types" and ages – children, young people, couples – provides a suitably evocative allegory of the human condition, as they pass by the camera, carried by the conveyor-belt's automatic movement through a space saturated with the audiovisual signifiers of today's culture of frantic consumption. An embodiment of modern life's mechanical rhythms, the conveyor-belt provides an artificial sense of continuity, direction, and purpose where fragmentation and senselessness reign. Mid-way through the film, Rey points his camera toward the lonely silhouette of an old man – a frail, yet insubordinate figure walking away slowly, on the side of the conveyor, and in the direction opposite to that of its herd of busy passengers.

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At regular intervals toward the end of the film, the camera is set onto the conveyor belt and temporarily adopts the point of view of the travelers. These sequences are punctuated with shots of a sign warning the users (and, by extension, the film spectator) of the approaching end of the journey. As we eventually reach the end of the trajectory, the screen first turns into a void – blank frame and silence; the subsequent sequences of images form a striking series of dissolving compositions, as the images, attacked by chemicals, undergo a succession of radical mutations. First splitting into a myriad of cells, as in a pointillist painting, the silhouettes take on grotesque appearances, and start to melt into the background like figures drawn by Edward Münch. Soon, they morph into fluid, organic shapes and black lines and stains, gracefully unraveling across the screen like a series of abstract etchings by Henry Michaux set in movement. At the very end of the film, the rough outlines of a face from an advertisement poster – made-up lips and painted nails – flash by, and a short, hysterical laughter resonates.

The foregrounding of the materiality of the film strip outlines its vulnerability, the film thus drawing a parallel between the ephemeral quality of human life and that of the art-form that paradoxically derives much of its power to fascinate from its apparent ability to "embalm" life and replay it endlessly as an illusion of live movement. As the images start to dissolve into nothingness at the end, frozen instants and isolated sounds linger for a few fractions of seconds, floating across the screen like memory images.

In Martine Rousset's film, as in Rey's work, sensitivity to cinema's unique relation to the workings of time is intricately bound with an exploration of the qualities specific to the diverse formats that constitute analog film's unique versatility. To work with analog, says Rousset, is to capture images that "breathe," and to be able to choose formats in accordance with their own merits: 8 mm for its lightness, 16 mm for stability.[37] In *Chant* (1995, 20 min), however, these qualities are foregrounded through an unusual interface of analog and electronic imaging: footage from a television screen was first shot on super 8 film, then shot again on 16 mm, and the speed and coloring manipulated through optical printing. "Re-mediation" here – as the recuperation of footage from one media to another – thus operates in reverse, from electronic footage back to celluloid (and back again as the film is finally distributed in the form of VHS and DVDs). The initial footage is of a televised solo concert by the singer Barbara, which Rousset combines with footage of bombardments showing crumbling buildings set ablaze – the shadow of the Second World War thus looms over the silhouette of the adult Barbara, a reminder of the singer's experience of the war and the occupation as a Jewish child in hiding. Through the process of multiple reshooting and the alteration of the filmed footage's photographic qualities and speed, the initial televised footage, simultaneously deteriorated and enhanced, is rendered mysterious and wonderful. The result is an elegiac comingling of film and memory, inscription and erasure. Grainy, highly contrasted images conjure up the bluish outline of the singer's face or of her slender silhouette, elusive traces that flicker across the screen, or superimpose

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themselves on the footage of devastation before they are engulfed again by the darkness that surrounds them.[38] The music – sparse piano chords, alternating with the ominous sound of bells, linger, as if suspended in time – emphasizes the prevailing sense of fragility and elusiveness. Here, film is, as Rousset puts it, "the trace of the trace of the trace of the trace."[39] *Chant*'s images suggest that since, to paraphrase George Didi-Huberman, its aesthetic is that of the imprint,[40] and because it is exposed to decay, film as celluloid can, better than other audiovisual media, show the workings of memory. Even as "the trace of the trace of the trace of the trace," the film's compelling material presence grants the images their unusual impact and power of evocation.

In Jean-Charles Fitoussi's feature film, *Nocturnes pour le roi de Rome* (2005), the medium of the moving image is similarly celebrated as a key repository of the memory of the twentieth century. Like Bibo Bergeron and Sylvain Chomet's features discussed earlier, Fitoussi's film is a hybrid, where analog meets digital filmmaking. Here, however, the encounter takes place in the still atypical cinematic zone of the mobile phone feature film.

The film takes the form of a diary, in which an old German composer recounts his last days in Rome, where he has been invited by the king in order to compose a series of eight *nocturnes* (Joseph Haydn, who composed the *Nocturnes pour le roi de Naples*, is one of the inspirations for Fitoussi's character). Upon his arrival, however, the ailing musician is besieged by visions from his past: the ghost of his deceased beloved wife, as well as memories of the Second World War, which he experienced as a tiny child.

Fitoussi shot all of the contemporary footage on location with a mobile phone camera. The low definition digital images evoke a multiplicity of other media surfaces including analog film. The result is an immersive visual universe composed of "fragile, indefinite images, where outlines dissolve into color fields; images alive with stories that alternatively ~~evoke~~ vision through a microscope, the surface of a painting, or super 8 film," the entrancing ~~evocation of the~~ "visions of a sickly old man, immersed in the turmoil of a reality that has become unfamiliar, inhospitable …"[41]

The old man's recollections, however, either as conscious evocations or sudden moments of involuntary memory, take the form of analog photographs and film footage – portraits of his wife as a young woman reminiscent of Chris Marker's classic work on cyclical time, *La Jetée* (1962); archive footage of the city being bombed, or of German soldiers marching; and extracts of Italian films of the neo-realist and modernist period. Some of these extracts literally puncture the slightly hazy texture of the film's main body of images: the dreadful episode of the death of Pina (Anna Magnani) in *Roma, città aperta* / *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), for instance, appears for a mere few seconds, a visual shock that rips through the film's surface.

The matrix of the film is a striking sequence-shot (over 20 min) described by Fitoussi as the "waiters' ballet."[42] It is a scene of banquet, taking place on a large open-air terrace, at dusk. In front of Fitoussi's camera, the staff in uniform prepare

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the tables and orchestrate the placement and service of the elegantly dressed guests, as through a choreography rehearsed to perfection. Gestures and postures repeat themselves, lines are formed and undone, yet the camera, in its slow, fluid panning movements, manages to capture isolated figures and unguarded expressions that, for a moment, break through the decorum. Little by little, as night falls and the orangey glow of candles spreads over the tables, the ghosts of the past emerge more insistently, extradiegetic images and ~~the~~ sounds increasingly permeating both the visual and audio track.

The narrator himself, however, is a ghostly figure. The old composer never appears on screen, his presence restricted to a disembodied voice, which shares the sound track with a range of classic musical compositions, from the baroque to the romantic repertoire. As he reminisces about the war and its devastations, the grain of the narrator's voice (the composer speaks in a low register, in a voice marked by age and with a distinct German accent) combines with the musical track as the allegorical expression of an artistic culture that knows no boundaries. The voice-over, however, does not function as a guarantee of "veracity": the narrator's slightly hesitant recollections hardly provide any information as such. As the old man's ~~unusual~~ voice flows over the trembling images, a sense of intimacy is created, between spectator and narrator, and between the spectator and the film's material presence. Yet in spite of the diary form, and of the film's emanating from a camera normally attached to a personal communication device, *Nocturnes*' voice-over narration does not bring forth a sense of "immediacy and presence"[43] in the conventional way: the voice of the old composer might well, in the end, come from beyond the grave.

In its evocation of cinema as historical witness, *Nocturnes pour le roi de Rome* pays homage to Jean-Luc Godard's colossal video masterpiece, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[44] But Fitoussi's film, the style of which recalls the poetic docu-fiction of Vincent Dieutre, also belongs to a broader strand of independent cinema, sometimes coined *"tiers-cinéma,"* and heralded by the distributor Pointligneplan.[45] Pointligneplan gathers together a group of directors working in low-budget filmmaking, and open to experimenting with the possibilities offered by new technologies even as they bemoan the potential demise of film's traditional formats. Dieutre explains:

> Endless regrets on the part of the directors of the *tiers-cinéma* for the grain of analog film, for the vibration of its unscrolling images … To continue to film in super-8, in 16 mm or in 35 mm, as if painting against all good judgment, for the beauty of it, without fetishism? The issue is one of resources. The *tiers-cinema* knows all this, for the market forced it to learn to manage before the Dogma-like fun aesthetes with their cinema of circumstantial poverty. The *tiers-cinéma* happily mixes formats because our cinema is violently impure. It has nothing to lose for all is already lost. No one will escape the digital; the *tiers-cinéma* has humbly learned to do with it.[46]

Most crucially, however, the kind of cinema advocated by Fitoussi, Dieutre, and a number of independent filmmakers engaged in digital filmmaking is a cinema where chance plays a key role. Whereas the digital, with all the easiness of

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post-production manipulation that it entails, often results in the creation of a highly policed form of cinema, films such as Fitoussi's *Nocturnes*, while they clearly seek to extend cinema's formal lexis, also testify to the willingness to embrace new technological tools as a means to explore the pro-filmic in all its uncertainty.

Conclusion

As Dieutre's melancholy optimism reminds us, it is less the digital *per se* that is a threat to film creativity, than the notion of one format, one aesthetic, replacing all. French cinema's strength has always grown out of the diversity of its production, and resistance to the kind of aesthetic standardization that digital filmmaking might breed is therefore of key importance here.[47] As well as the continuation of varied filmmaking practices, the maintenance of a cinematic culture that is deeply embedded in the ritual of cinema-going is essential to the upholding of such diversity, not only because traditional conditions of viewing ensure that the layering of temporalities[48] so vital to the experience and enjoyment of film is preserved, but also because it contributes to the continuation of a shared culture.[49] As Jacques Aumont emphasizes, if films generate such heated discussions in terms of taste and distaste, it is because, more than any other art form, "cinema holds, in social life, a uniquely *collective* place." Indeed, he adds, recent technological changes have made cinema more present in contemporary culture as a whole: "cinematographic culture has become an essential part of culture as a whole. In some ways, one could say that cinema has never existed more than today."[50]

Notes

1 On the topic of Antoine Lumière's response to George Méliès's attempt at purchasing a camera, see "Un art sans avenir?," interview with Thierry Frémaux, *La Lettre de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts* 38 (2004): 9.

2 Antonin Artaud, "La Vieillesse précoce du cinéma," *Cahiers jaunes* 4 (1933): 24.

3 On past and present relations between television and cinema in a French context see *La Télévision a-t-elle tué le cinema?*, ed. Jean Cluzel (Paris: PUF, 2005).

4 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion list no less than eight so-called deaths of the cinema since its invention, in *La Fin du cinéma? Un média en crise à l'ère du numérique* (Paris : Armand Colin, 2013). Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs: cinéma – installations, expositions* (Paris: POL, 2012), 13 protests that "the worst should not always be expected. Cinema has survived, it is surviving, its health record would surprise you. In effect, there have been several deaths of the cinema, each connected to a period of mutation." (Unless otherwise stated, translations from sources in French are my own.)

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5 The refashioning of an older media by a new media form. See Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's classic study on the interface between old and new media, *Remediation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000), 273.

6 In his editorial to issue 62 of *Senses of Cinema*, Rolando Caputo gives the question of the French cinema culture a nostalgic twist as he consigns the peak of France's investment in cinema (culturally, socially, and politically) to the 1960s and 1970s: "Once upon a time in France, long, long before *The Artist* and all it represents was even a blimp on distant horizons, film culture had an altogether different dimension and orientation. That orientation can be summed up, perhaps too simply, in one phrase: 'the politics of film'. And its effects were felt at all levels of film culture, from the mainstream industry to the independents and all manner of production modes in between; from filmmakers to audiences; from ciné-clubs to film schools; from film journals to film scholars. No strata of film culture remained untouched." http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/editorial/welcome-to-issue-62-of-our-journal, accessed May 20, 2014.

7 Bellour, *Querelle*, 24 (italics in original text). See also Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). Andrew's eloquent defense of a cinema free of the derivative effects of (digital) postproduction relies primarily on the Bazinian school of film theory and criticism, as well as a predominantly French corpus of films.

8 See in particular Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, "*Noli me tangere*: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*," in *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 456–487 and Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard:Cinema Historian* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

9 *Cinéma d'été* is included in the collection of short films *Chacun son cinéma ou Ce petit coup au cœur quand la lumière s'éteint et que le film commence / To Each His Own Cinema* (various directors, 2007).

10 Joachim Lepastier, "Un film sourd," *Cahiers du cinéma* 671 (October 2011): 39.

11 Emilia Morreale, "Cinéma vintage," *Cahiers du cinéma* 673 (December 2011): 17.

12 For many of the film theorists of the time the passage from silent to sound film not only contributed to establish Hollywood's dominance, but spelt the death of film from an aesthetic point of view. See, amongst others, the skeptical assessments of sound film's potential by Rudolph Arnheim, *Film* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933) and *Film Essays and Criticism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Belà Balazs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952); and French director René Clair in Lucy Fischer, "René Clair, *Le Million*, and the Coming of Sound," *Cinema Journal* 16:2 (1977): 34–50.

13 The November 2011 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*, for instance, was entitled "Adieu 35 – La Révolution numérique est terminée." See also, among other publications, and in addition to Bellour's seminal *Querelle*: Jacques Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?* (Paris: Vrin, 2012); Philippe Dubois's polemical *Yes, It's Cinema: Forms and Spaces of the Moving Images* (Pasian di Prato, Italy: Campanotto Editore, 2009); Jean-Michel Frodon, *Horizon Cinéma:l'art du cinéma dans le monde contemporain, à l'âge du numérique et de la mondialisation* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2006); and Angel Quintana, *Virtuel? À l'ère du numérique, le cinéma est toujours le plus réaliste des arts* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2008). In the most recent publication on the topic, Gaudreault and Marion, *La Fin du cinéma?*, offer a survey of the main arguments.

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14 On the concept and process of "relocation" see Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience," *Screen* 5:1 (2009): 56–66, and "Back to the Motherland: The Film Theatre in the Postmedia Age," *Screen* 52:1 (2011): 1–12.

15 Bellour, *Querelle*, 14.

16 Jean-Luc Godard's classic aphorism, "Cinema is that which is bigger than us, something we have to look up to," is quoted in the "cinema zone" of Chris Marker's CD Rom *Immemory* (1988).

17 Bellour, *Querelle*, 28.

18 Ibid., 12. Italics in original text. See also Raymond Bellour, "The Cinema Spectator: A Special Memory," in *Audiences*, ed. Ian Christie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 206–218, and "La Querelle des dispositifs," *Art Press* 262 (2000): 48–52; Éric De Kuyper, "L'Autre Histoire du cinéma, ou la perte du spectacle: qui gagne, qui perd?," in *In the Very Beginning, at the Very End*, ed. Francesco Casetti and Jane Gaines (Udine, Italy: Forum, 2010), 143–151.

19 Roland Barthes, "En sortant du cinéma," *Communications* 23 (1975): 104–107, translated by Richard Howard in *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 348.

20 From Olivier Assayas to Theo Angelopoulos, the Dardenne as well as the Cohen brothers, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Gus Van Sant, Roman Polanski, Abas Kiarostami, and Wong Kar Wai, to name but a few of the contributors.

21 On this topic, see Bellour's account of Myriam Hansen's story about young female students watching films on televisions while exchanging comments on their mobile phones (Bellour, *Querelle*, 15).

22 Ibid., 19.

23 On digital film and indexicality, see Niels Niessen, "Lives of Cinema: Against Its 'Death'," *Screen* 52:3 (2011): 307–326.

24 Aurélien Ferenczi and Manuel Braun, "Des images nourries au grain," *Télérama* 3286, January 2013, 20.

25 The fast rate of technological obsolescence does in fact put digital archiving on the spot: the life expectancy of digital formats is small and therefore does not offer the long-term safety of celluloid. See the conclusions to John Belton's article "Digital Cinema: A False Revolution," *October* 100 (2002): 98–114. See also the questions raised in the DigitalFilm Tree report, *Archiving in Media and Entertainment Market: Strategies and Best Practices*, http://www.group47.com/hp_digital_archiving_white_paper.pdf, accessed May 20, 2014.

26 Doane emphasizes that "What is lost in the move to the digital is the imprint of time, the visible degradation of the image." See Mary-Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18:1 (2007): 129–152, at 144; Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 57.

27 The film's monster evokes E. T. A. Hoffmann's "Master Flea: A Fairy-Tale" in *Seven Adventures of Two Friends* (1822), in which a showman uses a magnifying lens and projected light to turn his flea circus into a kind of live magic lantern spectacle. One of the insects, the Master flea, is a benevolent creature who comes to the aid of the story's main protagonists.

28 The reference to Méliès is even more central in Martin Scorsese's recent adaptation of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* in his 3D film *Hugo* (2011).

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29 The shadow of Charles Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952) thus looms over Chomet's film, as it did over Hazanavicius's *The Artist*.

30 See, among others, Peter Bradshaw's review in the *Guardian*, August 19, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/aug/19/the-illusionist-review, accessed May 20, 2014; the *New York Times* review by Manohla Dargis, August 23, 2010; or the account of a round table interview at the Berlin Film Festival in *Electric Sheep*, August 1, 2010, http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/features/2010/08/01/the-illusionist-interview-with-sylvain-chomet/, accessed May 20, 2014.

31 In a discussion of Pixar's first *Toy Story*, Jennifer Barker points out how the film's "texture is completely manufactured and processed. … This film's skin has no grain to it, no roughness, no messiness: it is as smooth as a plastic Magic Eight ball." Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 45. Peter Bradshaw's *Guardian* review of Chomet's work emphasizes the opposite qualities: "Simply being an animation, and an old-style animation, is a great effect. *The Illusionist* is like a séance that brings to life scenes from the 1950s with eerie directness, in a way that glitzy digital animation or live-action period location work could somehow never do."

32 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001), 29. In a similar vein, the term proposed by Gaudreault and Marion, *La Fin du cinéma?*, 256 to describe the cinema of the digital age is *animage*, a cross between animation and image.

33 Ian Garwood, *The Sense of Film Narration* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

34 Paul Arthur, "The Status of Found Footage," *Spectator* 20:1 (1999): 57–70, at 67.

35 For an analysis of materialist practices in the age of digital filmmaking see Martine Beugnet and Kim Knowles, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Obsolescence: Hand-Made Film in the Era of the Digital," *MIRAJ* 2:1 (2013): 54–65. For a contextualization of Rey's work see Martine Beugnet, "French Experimental Cinema: The Figural and the Formless," in *Avant-Garde Film*, ed. Alexander Graf and Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 279–299.

36 See Beugnet and Knowles, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Obsolescence," and *Tacita Dean's eloquent defense of celluloid film practice in Film* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011).

37 Martine Rousset, "Tramer les vitesses," in *Cent ans de cinéma expérimental* (Paris: La Cinémathèque française, 2002), quoted on the Arte Website http://www.arte.tv/fr/09-septembre/932792.html, accessed May 20, 2014.

38 The kind of aesthetic at work in *Chant* could be related to what is sometimes described as aesthetics of the ruin, or aesthetics of decay. See André Habib, "Le Temps décomposé: ruines et cinéma," *Protée* 35:2 (2007): 15–26.

39 Rousset, Arte website, 2002.

40 Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Empreinte* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997).

41 Christian Merlhiot, interview with Jean-Charles Fitoussi, http://www.pointligneplan.com/entretien-avec-jean-charles-fitoussi-par-christian-merlhiot, accessed May 20, 2014.

42 Ibid.

43 A sense of veracity, immediacy, and presence are three of the effects conventionally associated with the voice-over. See Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 43.

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44 Immune to the beauties of Fitoussi's film, Nicolas Azalbert dismisses it as a "*Histoire(s) du cinéma* du pauvre" in his review, "Nocturnes pour le roi de Rome," *Cahiers du cinéma* 652 (2010): 74.

45 On the "tiers-cinéma," see Vincent Dieutre's texts on the website www.pointligne-plan.com, and Vincent Dieutre, "Abécédaire pour un tiers cinéma," *La Lettre du cinéma* 21 (2003): 75–85.

46 Ibid., 75.

47 On the occasion of his 2013 New Year speech at the Cinémathèque française, the director of the Centre National du Cinéma, Eric Garandeau, emphasized French cinema's current good health. While recognizing the continuing precarious situation of independent cinema, his speech paid homage to the national and international success of films such as *The Artist*. It also unreservedly celebrated the progress that digital represents, both in terms of production and distribution, paying little heed to the issues raised by the so-called digital "revolution" in the French context.

48 That is, the simultaneous experience of the diegetic time, of the time of the projection, and of the sense of rhythm created by the film itself. See Jacques Aumont's useful summary in *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*, 96–97.

49 Thierry Frémaux, current head of the Cannes Film Festival, reaffirmed his confidence in terms that may not, in retrospect, seem as idealistic as they initially sounded: "Cinema loves to play at scaring itself because it is used to living with a kind of 'philosophy of disappearance.' During its one century in existence, it has been pronounced dead more often than literature, painting, or music. But yes, we will still go to the cinema in 20 or 50 years. In 1895, the Lumière cinematograph won over Edison's kinetoscope because spectators at the time wanted to see 'a film on a large screen, together,' to share the laughter, the tears, and their vision of the world. This remains true." Interview with Thierry Frémaux, "Un art sans avenir?," *La Lettre de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts* 38 (2004): 9.

50 Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*, 55.

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